

Listing of Claims

17. Currently Amended. A process for increasing the decolorizing activity of a layer silicate for treatment of oils, fats and waxes comprising the step of

treating the layer silicate with an acid-producing microorganism until a pH value of not more than about 3.4 is obtained.

18. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 wherein the layer silicate comprises a smectite clay.

19. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 wherein the layer silicate comprises a montmorillonite clay.

20. (Original) The process of Claim 19 wherein the montmorillonite clay comprises a bentonite clay.

21. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 wherein the layer silicate comprises a palygorskite clay.

22. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 20 wherein the layer silicate further comprises a palygorskite clay.

23. (Original) The process of Claim 17 wherein the acid-producing microorganism comprises a sulfur-oxidizing bacteria.

24. (Original) The process of Claim 17 wherein the acid-producing microorganism comprises an iron-oxidizing bacteria.

25. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 23 wherein the sulfur-oxidizing bacteria comprises Thiobacillus thiooxidans.

26. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 24 wherein the

iron-oxidizing bacteria comprises Thiobacillus ferrooxidans.

27. Original The process of Claim 17 wherein the acid-producing microorganism produces citric acid.

28. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 27 wherein the citric acid-producing microorganism comprises Aspergillus niger.

29. Previously Amended The process of Claim 17 wherein the layer silicate is in the form of raw clay and wherein the process further comprises breaking up the raw clay into clumps with a size from about 0.5 cm to about 5 cm prior to treating the layer silicate.

30. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 further comprising adding the acid-producing microorganisms to an inoculant material prior to treating the layer silicate with the microorganisms which have been added to the inoculant material.

31. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 30 wherein the population of the microorganisms added to the layer silicate is from about 10^6 to about 10^{10} bacteria/g of the inoculant material.

32. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 further comprising maintaining the temperature of the layer silicate during treating within the range from about 20 to about 35°C.

33. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 further comprising maintaining the water content of the layer silicate during treating within a range from about 15 percent by weight to about 70 percent by weight.

34. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 30 wherein the inoculant material added to the layer silicate comprises about 5 to about 20 percent of the overall composition after the inoculant material has been added.

35. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 further comprising mixing and aerating the layer silicate while it is being treated with the acid-producing microorganism.

36. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 35 wherein the treating process occurs for a period of time from about 1 to about 365 days.

37. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 further comprising adding nutrients for the microorganisms to the layer silicate prior to treating with the acid-producing microorganisms.

38. (Original) The process of Claim 37 wherein the nutrients added comprise sulfur-containing products.

39. (Previously Amended) The process of Claim 17 further comprising adding small quantities of a dilute acid to the layer silicate prior to treating with the acid-producing microorganisms.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Cancelled)

42. (New) The process of Claim 17 wherein the pH level is determined by suspending 8 parts of a sample of the treated layer silicate in 100 parts of water and measuring the pH-value by means of a pH measurement electrode.

43. New A process for increasing the decolorizing activity of a layer silicate for treatment of oils, fats and waxes comprising the steps of treating the layer silicate with an acid-producing microorganism until a pH value of not more than 4 is obtained.

44. New The process of Claim 43 wherein the pH value is from about 2 to 4.

BASIS FOR AMENDMENT

The applicants have amended Claim 17 to require that the pH value of the layer silicate after processing be not more than about 3.4. The pH value of the treated layer silicate of new Claim 43 is not more than 4. In Claim 44 the pH value is from 2 - 4. Basis for these process steps with these pH values is contained on page 6, line 8 and in Tables 1 and 2, Examples 3-6 and Examples 10 and 11 of the specification. No new subject matter is introduced by this amendment or these new claims.